

GH exhaust gas purifying means provided in the exhaust passage at a downstream of and in series with said light-off catalyst, said exhaust gas purifying means having a NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst for adsorbing NO<sub>x</sub> in the exhaust gas when an air-fuel ratio of the exhaust gas is lean and releasing the adsorbed NO<sub>x</sub> when the oxygen concentration of the exhaust gas is reduced, said exhaust gas purifying means further having a three-way catalyst that reacts with the released NO<sub>x</sub>; and

control means for reducing the oxygen concentration in the exhaust gas such that said at least one of HC and CO that has passed through said light-off catalyst is introduced to said NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst when an NO<sub>x</sub> conversion efficiency of the NO<sub>x</sub> catalyst is decreased.

Sub 41  
GT 2 5. (Twice Amended) The exhaust gas purifying apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein the light-off catalyst has the oxygen storage capability of a first value and the three-way catalyst of the exhaust gas purifying means has a an oxygen storage capability of a second value greater than said first value.

6. (Twice Amended) The exhaust gas purifying apparatus as defined in claim 5, wherein an amount of oxygen adsorbed on the three-way catalyst of said exhaust gas purifying means is not greater than about 150 cc per one-liter volume of the catalyst when measured by an oxygen pulse method.

7. (Twice Amended) The exhaust gas purifying apparatus as defined in claim 6, wherein an oxygen component stored in the three-way catalyst of

*C+2* said exhaust gas purifying means is not greater than about 25g per one-liter volume of the catalyst.

*C+3 Sub H1* 10. (Amended) The exhaust gas purifying apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein the exhaust gas purifying means is a single catalyst.

*C+4 Sub H1* 11. (Twice Amended) The exhaust gas purifying apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein the single catalyst of the exhaust gas purifying means includes a function of the three-way catalyst.

12. (Twice Amended) The exhaust gas purifying apparatus as defined in claim 10, wherein the light-off catalyst includes a single catalyst that functions as the three-way catalyst.

*C+5 Sub H1* 13. (Amended) The exhaust gas purifying apparatus as defined in claim 12, wherein the exhaust gas purifying means further functions also as the NOx catalyst.

14. (Amended) The exhaust gas purifying apparatus as defined in claim 13, wherein the light off catalyst functions also as an SOx catalyst.

Please add new claim 15:

*C+6 Sub H1* --15. The exhaust gas purifying apparatus as defined in claim 1, wherein said condition where the oxygen concentration of the exhaust gas is reduced includes at least one of a stoichiometric operating condition and a fuel rich operating condition.--